

Remarks

Reconsideration and reversal of the rejections expressed in the Office Action of March 9, 2004 are respectfully contended in view of the following remarks and the application as amended. The present invention relates to a method for reducing the amount of particles and residues in photomasks.

A new declaration is submitted herewith that is believed to overcome the Examiner's objections, as well as a substitute drawing sheet for Fig. 2. The specification has been otherwise amended by the submission of replacement paragraphs herein in a manner believed to overcome the objections to the specification. The specification has also been reviewed and amendments made to correct typographical and editorial errors. No new matter has been added.

Claims 1 - 5, 7, 9 and 11 to 13 have been clarified to overcome the Examiner's 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, rejections. Claims 14 to 17 have been added to more fully encompass the full scope and breadth of the invention notwithstanding the patentability of the original claims.

Claims 1 - 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. The claims have been clarified to overcome this rejection. The additional 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph rejection of claims 1 - 6 and 7 - 13 has been similarly overcome.

Claims 1 - 13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Kern in view of Hanson et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,472,516) (the '516 patent). Note that Applicants' invention as presently claimed defines a method for reducing the amount of particles and residues in photomasks by inter alia, providing a photomask having patterned metal layers; treating the photomask with a cleaning process; removing particles greater than about 0.2 microns while removing a minimal amount of patterned metal layers; and exercising the cleaning process on a particular photomask for a multiple number of cleaning cycles without degradation of the photomask.

Kern, in contrast, discloses cleaning of silicon wafers which are not photomasks, while the '516 patent discloses a method for cleaning wafers which are not photomasks. Neither of these cited references are relevant to cleaning of photomasks as disclosed and claimed in the present invention. Therefore, prima facie obviousness is not established.

For all of the above reasons, it is respectfully contended that the solicited claims define patentable subject matter. Reconsideration and reversal of the rejections expressed in the Office Action of March 9, 2004 are respectfully submitted. The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned if any questions arise during the course of reconsideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

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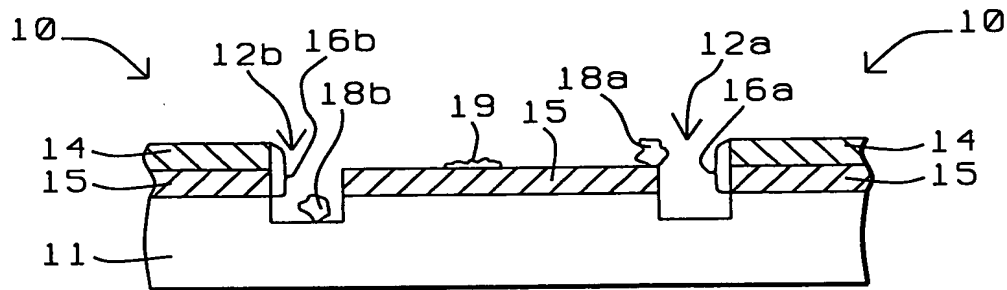


FIG. 1

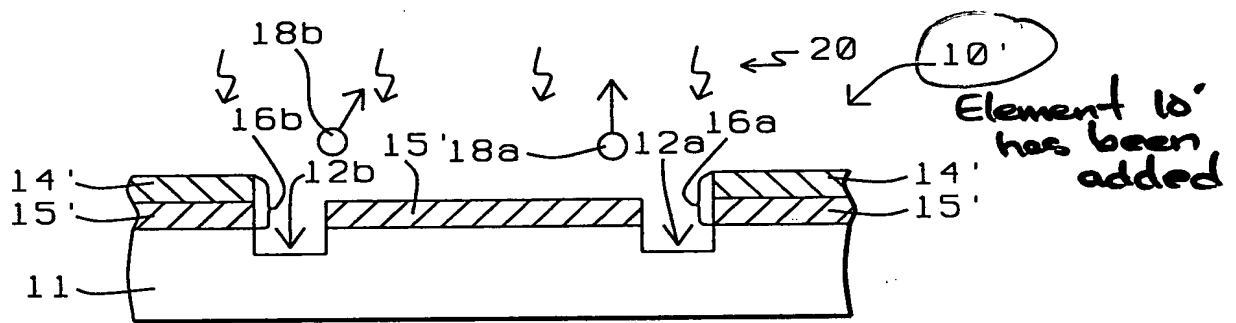


FIG. 2

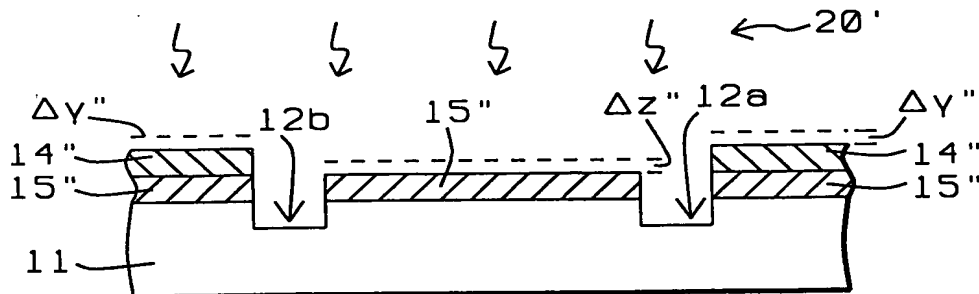


FIG. 3